

# *Patapsco/Back Tributary Team*

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## **About the Watershed:**

The Patapsco/Back River Watershed is unique among Maryland's 10 Tributary Team watersheds in that it has two rivers that drain the Baltimore metropolitan area – Maryland's largest urban population center. It also has two of the three largest sewage treatment plants in the state and the most intensely developed land uses. The Patapsco and Back Rivers are degraded by centuries of development, and many efforts are underway to reverse the effects of years of pollution. Top team priorities include legacy issues, contaminated sediments, inappropriate shoreline development, loss of habitat, and degraded feeder streams.

## **About the Team:**

The Patapsco/Back Basin drains about 630 square miles of land, including Baltimore City and portions of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, and Howard Counties. The team strives to work with the five local jurisdictions within the watershed to find regional solutions to the difficult problems that confront them.

The Patapsco and Back Rivers are degraded by centuries of development. Water quality has been recognized as an important priority, and many efforts are underway to reverse the effects of years of pollution. Legacy issues, contaminated sediments, inappropriate shoreline development, loss of habitat, degraded feeder streams are all issues that are taking a Herculean effort to address. The team attempts to assist state and local agencies as well as private sector entities to identify and address these issues. The team brings a broad perspective to the task, believing that their role is to engage citizens and decision makers in dialogue that leads to positive action. With the guidance and leadership of Chair Fran Flanigan, they plan to stay connected and energized in cleaning up the Patapsco and Back River Basins.

## **2001-2002 Accomplishments:**

- To prepare for the difficult work of developing a new Patapsco/Back Tributary Strategy, the team held a series of meetings throughout 2001 and 2002 to get informed about a variety of issues pertinent to the basin. These meetings were thematic in nature, focusing each month on a topic of current interest, such as the performance of the two big wastewater treatment plants, habitat goals for the watershed, the development of Chesapeake Bay water quality criteria, Smart Growth, the economics of pollution control, infrastructure needs, county-wide programs, and communications and networking in the basin.

The team held meetings in different locations to provide site visits to important facilities that impact the water quality in the basin. The team toured the FMC Agricultural Chemicals facility in Curtis Bay to gain a better understanding of the unique issues confronting large industrial manufacturers in the region. They also toured the Patapsco Wastewater Treatment Plant to see the installation of a Biological Nutrient Removal (BNR) pilot demonstration and to learn about the challenges of treating 60 million gallons of wastewater daily.

As part of this effort, the team also serves as a liaison to the state agencies charged with implementing programs to achieve Chesapeake Bay restoration goals. Team members actively participate in Tributary Strategy and Chesapeake Bay Program workgroups. As a result, the team feels well connected to the policy-making process.

- During the past 2 years, the team focused on re-energizing and expanding its membership to prepare for the huge job of developing a new Patapsco/Back Tributary Strategy. The team added to the strong core group of members by reaching out to area nonprofits and other interest groups in the Baltimore region. In particular, the team met with the Metropolitan Council of Watershed Organizations to engage them in

dialogue. The team formed a Communications and Outreach Workgroup to focus on targeting audiences and utilizing outreach methods. In December 2002, the team held a New Member Initiation Night at the Baltimore Aquarium to introduce new faces to the group and build new partnerships. The team plans to hold an event like this every year to rejuvenate the team and to reach out to additional stakeholders. The team continues to solicit the involvement of new groups and individuals in its work and has built a contact list to help achieve that. The team plans to reach out to the business community and local elected officials to encourage their participation as well.

- The City of Baltimore, in cooperation with the Patapsco-Back River Tributary Team and other organizations, sponsored the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Inner Harbor Secchi Dip-In to commemorate Senator Bernie Fowler's annual Patuxent River Wade-In. The events were held in June 2001 and 2002 along the Science Center promenade and included Secchi readings from the Back River, Venice on the Bay Beach, Patapsco State Park, Piney Run Lake, Liberty Reservoir, and the Inner Harbor. Volunteers from more than 24 environmental organizations, such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, and the Living Classrooms Foundation, took the readings. A local television station covered the event while results were displayed on site and several key speakers discussed the significance of water clarity. Captain Seaweed also sailed in for the day to introduce passersby to the affair and to increase the public awareness of water quality.
- 2001-2002 marked the second and third years that the team sponsored a tree grow-out station at the Back River Treatment Plant. The team received 350 seedlings in 2000 that were left over from another tree planting project. The Herring Run Watershed Association donated the pots and soil while several team members assisted in the potting. Baltimore City provided a fenced area to grow the seedlings, water for irrigation, and tools for the potting. Species for the first year included river birch, swamp white oak, red osier dogwood, and buttonbush.

During 2002, the operation was expanded to produce more than 1,000 ready to plant trees. One of the Tributary Team's Habitat Restoration grants funded this project. Species grown included indigo bush, buttonbush, river bush and green ash – all from the John S. Ayton State Tree Nursery. Although some of the trees were lost to the drought, survival rate was still as high as 80 percent. Trees were given to the National Aquarium in Baltimore for their experimental wetland project, to Morgan State University, and to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

- On April 22, 2001, the *Baltimore Sun* insert "Picture Maryland – Where Do We Grow From Here?" was published and distributed to more than one million Marylanders to educate them about growth issues and the protection of Maryland's natural resources. Several Patapsco/Back Team members participated in the Public Outreach Cross-Team Workgroup to develop and make this publication possible. The final products included a 32-page booklet that was circulated with the *Baltimore Sun* newspaper, an extensive webpage on the *Baltimore Sun's Sunspot*, and a companion Teacher's Resource Booklet that was distributed to more than 600 classrooms.
- On February 25, 2002, the team, with direction from Chair Fran Flanigan, wrote a letter to Governor Glendening outlining their priorities for the coming year and asking for support. Their priorities included stormwater, upgrades to the two major treatment plants, environmental education, and urban redevelopment. The letter also recognized the progress that has been made so far in curbing pollution and protecting vital natural resources. Working through these accomplishments, however, has led to a realization of the tremendous challenges inherent in implementing a coherent plan throughout the Bay Watershed. In response to this letter and others across the state, the Tributary Teams had the opportunity meet with Governor Glendening and his Bay Cabinet on May 16, 2002 to discuss their priorities and concerns.
- The Tributary Team chairs and vice-chairs met with Governor Parris Glendening on May 16, 2002 to thank him for his support during his term as Governor and to introduce some issues that the teams felt were crucial

to the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and its tributaries. These issues included stormwater, the Water Quality Improvement Act, cover crops, Living Shorelines, and oysters. Following the Tributary Team presentations, the Governor's Local Government, Citizens, Scientific and Technical, State Water Quality, and Coastal and Watershed Resources Advisory Committees reported out on their current work and the opportunities they foresaw to work with the Tributary Teams.

- During April and June 2002, two Patapsco/Back Team members were selected to participate in the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Tributary Team Leadership Development Training sponsored by the Tributary Strategies Program and the Institute for Governmental Services, University of Maryland. This program targeted the chairs, vice-chairs, and other leaders within each of the 10 Tributary Teams. The goal of the training was to enhance the leadership qualities that are needed within the Tributary Strategies Program. John Martin and Elinor Gawel represented the Patapsco/Back Team in the training, which consisted of three sessions over 4 days.
- On September 18, 2002, the team partnered with the Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Management (whose representative was Team Member Don Outen), the Natural Renewable Resources Foundation, and the Upper Western Shore Tributary Team to hold a bus tour of Baltimore County's non-point source abatement demonstration sites. Approximately 50 people participated in the tour that showcased the county's watershed management program and highlighted urban, suburban, and agricultural non-point source pollution reduction treatments.
- On September 28, 2002, the team partnered with several groups, including the Parks and People Foundation, to participate in the Mayor of Baltimore's "Believe" campaign to clean up the City of Baltimore. Local organizations were assigned locations around the city and the Inner Harbor to pick up trash, bottles, Styrofoam, or anything else contaminating the shorelines of Baltimore. The team was assigned a small park located along the Middle Branch across the water from Harbor Hospital and the Hanover Street Bridge. Team members plan to check this location annually to keep it clean.
- On October 3, 2002, Baltimore County Executive Dutch Ruppersburger and Baltimore City Mayor Martin O'Malley signed the Baltimore Watershed Agreement. This memorandum between the city and the county calls for common goals for managing the natural resources of shared watersheds, improved coordination of resource management strategies and programs, an inter-jurisdictional working committee, joint annual meetings with citizen-based watershed organizations and community groups, and an annual State of the Watersheds Report. Several team members were active in making this agreement a priority for the city and the county. The shared watersheds in the city and county include Gwynns Falls, Jones Falls, Back River, Patapsco River, and the Baltimore Harbor. The team will continue to follow the coordination between Baltimore City and County to ensure that the agreement is upheld.

### **2003 Priorities:**

- The team plans to work with local governments and the Tributary Strategies Development Workgroup to write the Patapsco/Back Tributary Strategy. They plan to coordinate this effort with the Reservoir Agreements and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) that are in place for the watershed. Coordination with these groups will be vital to creating manageable and achievable goals for the basin. The team will continue to coordinate with the TMDL Workgroup, sponsored by the Maryland Department of the Environment, and other stakeholder groups as well. Public meetings will be held in the summer and fall of 2003 to educate the public about the Tributary Strategies Program and to solicit comments on the draft strategy.
- The team plans to hold their 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Secchi Dip-In at the Baltimore Waterfront Festival in April 2003. Water quality readings will be taken across the watershed, and the Baltimore City Department of Public Works will compile the data to come up with an average water quality reading for the two rivers.

- The team will continue to be involved in identifying dredging options for the Baltimore Harbor. Members are keeping apprised of current activities and are regularly attending meetings with the Maryland Port Administration to assist them in determining possible dredge material relocation sites.
- The team plans to continue its grow-out station at the Back River Treatment Plant in 2003 with 500 seedlings, working closely to ensure that all of the trees find homes. Species for 2003 include silky dogwood, willow oak, and persimmon.
- The team plans to continue to expand its membership, focusing on the agriculture and business communities, watershed organizations, and minority groups.

The team award recognizes the team member who has made significant contributions to the team and the watershed. Team members and participants nominate the awardee and final determinations are made by the chair and vice-chair of the team. The awardee receives a Governor's citation at the annual meeting and press releases of their award and contributions are distributed to their local and state newspapers.

### **2001 Team Awardee**

At the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Tributary Team Meeting held on February 23, 2002, Jack Anderson was named the 2001 Patapsco/Back Team Awardee by a unanimous vote from team members and participants. Jack has provided great leadership to the team, especially by serving as chair from December 1997 until May 2001. He worked diligently to launch the Patapsco Secchi Dip-In, which is now an annual tradition that coincides with the Bernie Fowler Wade-In. This event focuses public attention on water quality in the Baltimore Harbor and neighboring tributaries by measuring water clarity at various locations around the basin. Jack also facilitated the establishment of the Metropolitan Workgroup to provide input to the Chesapeake Bay Program from the urban local jurisdictions in the Bay Watershed. Finally, he successfully helped to create new partnerships with the Tributary Team within the entire Patapsco/Back Basin and laid the groundwork for the team's outreach strategy.

### **2002 Team Awardee**

Stuart Stainman was named the 2002 Patapsco/Back Team Awardee at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Tributary Team Meeting that was held on February 1, 2003. Stuart assumed a tremendous amount of leadership in coordinating the team's annual Secchi Dip-In. In 2002, Stuart was instrumental in establishing partnerships between the team and other watershed organizations, particularly the Living Classrooms Foundation, to provide an educational water quality skipjack tour of the Baltimore Harbor for citizens as part of the Dip-In event. Stuart also coordinated the Secchi readings from all over the watershed and worked with the Baltimore City Department of Public Works to have the data analyzed and compared to previous years. Stuart has agreed to work on the team's 2003 Secchi Dip-In that will be in conjunction with the annual Baltimore Waterfront Festival.

### **Team Members**

Fran Flanigan, Chair, Citizen  
John Martin, Vice-Chair, Back River Wastewater Treatment Plant  
Scott Macomber, State Contact, MD Dept. of the Environment  
Jack Anderson, Citizen  
Angie Ashley, National Aquarium in Baltimore  
Laura Bankey, National Aquarium in Baltimore  
John Botts, Aquatic Sciences Consulting  
Peter Conrad, Baltimore City Planning & Zoning  
Tom Filip, US Army Corps of Engineers  
Elinor Gawel, Anne Arundel Co. Office of Environmental and Cultural Resources  
Bob Garner, Friends of Patapsco Valley and Heritage Greenway  
Guy Hager, Parks & People Foundation  
Rich Hersey, Herring Run Watershed Assoc.  
Stuart Leister, Carroll Soil Conservation District  
Don Outen, Baltimore County DEPRM  
Susan Overstreet, Howard Planning & Zoning  
Kelly Powers, Herring Run Watershed Assoc.  
Catherine Rappe, MD Dept. of Natural Resources  
Gene Reynolds, FMC  
Jim Slater, Carroll Dept. of Public Works  
Bill Stack, Baltimore City Public Works  
Stuart Stainman, MD Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene  
Joe Stewart, Citizen  
Lee Walker-Oxenham, Patapsco Riverkeeper  
Raj Williams, Williams Associates  
Jacqueline Carrera, Parks & People Foundation

### **Team Participants**

Nathaniel Brown, MD Dept. of Transportation  
Melissa Chatham, MD Dept. of the Environment  
Lou Etgen, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay  
Mitch Graham, Morgan State University  
Eric Hines, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Guy Hollyday, Baltimore Sanitary Sewer Oversight Coalition  
Bob Hoyt, Ecologix  
Ed Null, Carroll Soil Conservation District  
Jessica Ritter, Howard Planning & Zoning  
Lorraine Andrews, Living Classrooms Foundation  
Martin Schmidt, McDonogh School  
Brion Townshend, Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
Jennifer Zielinski, Center for Watershed Protection

### **Team Coordinators**

Stephanie Blades, MD Dept. of Natural Resources  
Vince Leggett, MD Dept. of Natural Resources

### **For More Information:**

For more information, contact Stephanie Blades, team coordinator, at 410-260-8723. You can also visit our website at [www.dnr.state.md.us/bay/tribstrat/](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/bay/tribstrat/).